DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 407 EC 162 402

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TITLE Vocational Assessment and Programming for Handicapped Students: A Team Effort in Houston Independent School District.
INSTITUTION Houston Independent School District, Tex.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (61st, Detroit, MI, April 4-8, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Disabilities; Secondary Education; *Student Placement; Vocational Aptitude; *Vocational Education; *Vocational Evaluation; Vocational Interests; Work Sample Tests

ABSTRACT

The paper describes a vocational program combining assessment and training of handicapped students through a centralized vocational assessment center, parent/student counseling, community survey of occupational opportunities, and curriculum modification and development. Three levels of assessment are conducted (prevocational skills, interests and aptitudes, and work samples). Sample procedures and tests for each level are described. Assessment data are then used to make decisions about vocational alternatives (curriculum options and vocational placement in sheltered workshop, prevocational laboratory, vocational adjustment class, special vocational and regular vocational programs). Specific profiles of students are matched with profiles of vocational alternatives. (CL)

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VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMMING FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

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AGENDA

VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMMING FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS:

A TEAM EFFORT IN HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

CEC PROFESSIONAL SESSION
ANNUAL CONVENTION
FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 1983

Vocational Assessment Background Texas Education Agency Guidelines Three levels of Assessment	Beth Buckles Deans, Ed.D. Educational Diagnostician, Vocational Evaluation Center for the Handicapped
Vocational Assessment in Action	
Vocational Programming Vocational Alternatives Curriculum Options	Carolyn Guess, M.Ed. Associate Director for Special Populations, Secondary
Vocational Alternatives in Action	
Sharing of curricula materials, Assessment forms and reports	
Questions and Answers	

Vocational Assessment and Programming for Handicapped Students: A Team Effort in Houston I.S.D.

Beth Buckles Deans and Carolyn Guess

Houston Independent School District

Running Head: Vocational Assessment and Programming for Handicapped

Abstract

Theoretical positions and guidelines are sometimes difficult to implement on a local level. Sharing of our attempts to do so, however, will hopefully bring us closer to serving our handicapped learners appropriately. Recent federal and state mandates (Davis and Ward, 1978; Texas Education Agency, 1980) concerning vocational assessment and training of the handicapped have prompted the Special Education and the Occupational Education Departments in a large urban school district to cooperate in guidelines implementation. Three levels of vocational assessment, curricular alternatives and vocational training alternatives are presented.

Vocational Assessment and Programming for Handicapped Students:

A Team Effort in Houston I.S.D.

Vocational assessment of the handicapped prior to placement in a vocational education program was mandated to begin in the fall of 1982 in the Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 1980). Prior to that time, only routine psychoeducational testing such as intellectual and achievement levels were available to the secondary ARD/IEP committees making vocational placement decisions. Vocational assessment of the handicapped was ordinarily left to post-high school rehabilitation agencies. Few special education students were offered vocational testing available to the non-handicapped.

Pilot Programs

The need for vocational assessment of the handicapped was already felt across the state in the mid-1970's. Five pilot programs were selected and funded by the Texas Education Agency in 1975. The first author was the special education administrator in the Klein Independent School District in 1975 when the district applied for and was approved for a $900,000., three-year project to initiate vocational assessment and programming for the handicapped (Klein I.S.D., 1975). The project has been expanded and has continued to be a model for other school districts of moderate size. The model includes a centralized vocational assessment center, counseling services for the students and their parents, community survey of occupational opportunities and curriculum modification and development to meet the vocational training needs of special

learners.

Setting: A Large Urban School District

In the Houston I.S.D., a large urban school district, highly developed but separate vocational and special education departments existed prior to the new state vocational assessment guidelines. Hence, many resources for the handicapped student were already in existance, such as a state-approved credit system for special education courses leading to a high school graduation (Guess & Wedin, 1980). Vocational Education for the Handicapped (VEH) classes were already being taught to handicapped students by vocational education teachers on several campuses. What was missing was the bridge between the individual handicapped student and the appropriate vocational placement, i.e. relevant vocational assessment. This presentation gives an overview of how Houston I.S.D. developed a team approach to vocational assessment and programming for handicapped students.

Vocational Assessment

Vocational assessment of handicapped students in Houston I.S.D. is a joint effort of vocational and special education personnel. The planning phase included personnel from both departments over a period of several months. Examination of already available resources as well as visits to model programs such as Klein I.S.D. provided a starting point. The Texas Education Agency (1980) as well as the Council for Exceptional Children (Davis & Ward, 1978) had provided preliminary guidelines with which to begin.

Three Levels of Assessment

The three-level vocational assessment process was initiated in the

fall of 1981. Levels 1 and 2 are required for every handicapped student for whom vocational placement is being considered; Level 3 is provided handicapped students for whom more information is needed for decision-making.

Level 1. Pre-vocational skills are tested, interviews are conducted with parent, student and teachers and background information is collected by special education teachers and support personnel at Level 1. Most of the information is obtained during the 8th grade year from previous records. The testing which is included assesses pre-vocational competencies so that classroom instruction can remediate deficiencies. The test instruments vary by academic or reading level and include the Social and Pre-vocational Information Battery, Social and Pre-vocational Information Battery - T (Trainable) and Test for Everyday Living.

Level 2. Additional information is collected during the 9th grade year, usually the first year in high school and the year prior to vocational class placement. At Level 2, interest and aptitude are assessed by special education and vocational education assessment personnel. Interest testing is done by special education teachers in the classroom setting. Students with severely limited academic skills are administered the AAMD-Becker Reading-Free Interest Inventory. Higher functioning students are given the Wide Range Interest and Opinion Test. Interests are verified through personal interview with each student.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Vocational aptitudes are assessed with either group or abbreviated

FIGURE I

Three Levels of
Vocational Assessment

LEVEL I

GRADE: 8th SOURCE	DATA COLLECTED:	BY:
Special Education folder	Current Special Education Assessment of 1) language, physical, socialogical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual factors and adaptive behavior. 2) students academic, developmental and/or behavioral performance 3) educational competencies/needs related to vocational education.	Special Education Teacher Regular Education Teacher or Special Education Counselor
Cumulative folder	Cumulative Record Data - grades, attendance, discipline records, achievement or group IQ test.	
Vocational Assessment Report	Interviews with 1) student regarding interest. 2) teacher regarding student's prevocational competencies and adaptive behaviors. 3) parent regarding expectations and perceptions of students current behaviors and future.	Classroom Teacher or Team Personnel
Testing	Prevocational Competencies SPIB-T Social and Prevocational Information Battery (for trainable level). SPIB Social and Prevocational Information Battery (for educable level). TEL Test for Everyday Living (for LD and ED students).	Classroom Teacher

LEVEL II

GRADE: 9th

SOURCE:	DATA COLLECTED:	BY:
Testing	Vocational Interest	Classroom teacher VAC/ Team Personnel
	AAMD Becker Reading-Free Interest Inventory (for lower functioning students)	
	WRIOT - Wide Range Interest and Opinion Test (for higher functioning students)	
	Vocational Aptitude	
	McCarron - Dial Work Evaluation System for MR, severe ED, Autistic	Appraisal Personnel
	SAGE - Systematic Assessment and Group Evaluation (for LD, MR, ED, deaf with low reading levels below 6th grade).	
	GATB - General Aptitude Test Battery (for LD, ED, PH, reading at 6th grade or better)	Vocational Counselor

LEVEL III

GRADE: 9+ SOURCE:	DATA COLLECTED:	BY:
Work Evaluation (VEC-H)	Work Samples	Vocational Counselor and Educational Diagnostician
	VIEWS Vocational Information and Evaluation work samples (for lower functioning students)	
	OR	
	VITAS Vocational Interest Temperament and Aptitude System (for higher functioning students).	Vocational Counselor and Educational Diagnostician
	AND	
	VALPAR-VALPAR Component Work Samples Observation of Work Behaviors	

individual tests at Level 2, depending upon the student's functional level. The McCarron-Dial Work Evaluation System is individually administered to those students possessing moderate to severe intellectual, physical or emotional handicaps. These are students who must be tested individually because the extremity of their handicap precludes group testing procedures. The SAGE (Systematic Assessment and Group Evaluation) is administered to students with moderate limitations in reading who can be tested in small group of four to five within a half-day time period. Students who have diagnosed handicaps but appear to have the potential for regular vocational class placement and who have some academic skills, are tested in groups of six to nine with the GATB (General Aptitude Test Battery). Special Educational Personnel administer the McCarron-Dial and Sage; vocational counselors administer the GATB.

Level 3 work sample evaluation. Handicapped students for whom positive recommendations were not obtained from Levels 1 and 2 assessment are referred for Level 3 work sample evaluation. This evaluation is provided in a centrally-located Vocational Evaluation Center for the Handicapped. The center is staffed jointly by an Educational Diagnostician, this article's first author, and a Vocational Counselor. Most students are scheduled for a four-day testing session during the 9th grade year. The school district provides bus transportation for groups of between five and nine students, depending upon the need for individual assistance. All types of handicapped students are referred for Level 3 evaluation.

Because the handicapped conditions of the students vary from severe mental retardation to gifted students with emotional disturbance, a wide

range of work samples is provided. The VIEWS (Vocational Information and Evaluation Work Samples) includes 16 samples ranging from simple tile sorting to operating a drill press and was normed on a mentally retarded workshop population. The VITAS (Vocational Interest, Temperament and Aptitude System) provides 21 work samples varying from nut-bolt-washer assembly to a drafting unit. A normal CETA population was the normative population for the VITAS. Both the VIEWS and VITAS were designed and marketed by the Vocational Research Institude, formerly Jewish Employment and Vocational Service. In addition to these comprehensive batteries, selected units of the VALPAR component work samples are administered. Of particular value are the group assembly units, in which socially-related work skills are observable.

The objective of vocational assessment is to provide recommendations for vocational training, work adjustment and personal-social skill development which are useful to the Vocational ARD/IEP committee involved in decision-making. A written report of each student's interest, aptitudes, basic skills, physical capabilities and work behaviors is completed by the special education support personnel from the various sources. The remaining step is to match the student's unique characteristics with the appropriate program alternatives which are described below.

Vocational Alternatives

The large, secondary handicapped population (over 5,000) in the Houston I.S.D. makes possible a large number of vocational options. Options available for secondary handicapped students range from training in basic self-care skills for the severely and profoundly handicapped to college preparatory programs for those with academic potential. The

student's vocational assessment as well as his psycho-educational testing is considered by the school ARD/IEP Committee in determining instructional programming.

Curriculum Options

The Special Education Department of the Houston I.S.D. has adopted a four-level curricular sequence for handicapped students depending upon the student's needs. This state-approved sequence is an accredited system for developmental or academic and vocational classes which leads to high school graduation.

The components of the curriculum are career development, academic classes, pre-vocational training, workshop or vocational training. A copy of the graduation plans for the various options was made and is available through H.I.S.D. Curriculum Publications (Houston I.S.D., 1982, Secondary Programming).

Vocational Training

Handicapped students have access to all vocational programs offered in the school district's regular vocational programs, as well as special education vocational programs. A broad range of opportunities for vocational training provide for the variety of skill abilities evident in the handicapped population. When vocational education is proposed for the student, the ARD/IEP Committee includes the vocational administrator or his designee, the vocational teacher who will instruct the student, a counselor, and a special education representative. It considers vocational assessment data in determining the most appropriate vocational placement which include the following alternatives:

1. Vocational Education for the Handicapped (VEH). The Vocational

Education for the Handicapped programs are designed for students whose vocational education needs require smaller class settings, and more individualized instruction than the regular vocational program provides. Ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade handicapped students are eligible for this program upon recommendation of the ARD/IEP Committee.

The curriculum allows the individual student to progress at his or her own rate and provides training for entry level employment skills. Students spend three cosecutive hours in vocational classes and the remaining hours each day studying related mathematics, English, Science and Social Studies taught by Special Education teachers. Students enrolled in this Program are exempt from physical education. (One unit per semester of the earned one and one half credits per semester counts are physical education if needed to complete physical education requirements). Course offerings in the vocational classes include the following:

VEH Building Maintenance
VEH Food Services
VEH General Mechanical Repair
VEH Horticulture
VEH Office Duplication Practices
VEH Cooperative Training
VEH General Construction
VEH Home and Community Services
VEH Health Care
VEH Small Engine Repair

The VEH block normally consists of one or two years of vocational laboratory training and at least one semester of VEH cooperative training or on-the-job training through the Vocational Adjustment Coordinator. The laboratory programs are scheduled for three consecutive class periods in each of two semesters. Students must complete two semesters in a content area, and may take additional semesters as determined by the ARD/IEP Committee. To qualify for graduation credits, students must complete at least one year in a vocational laboratory program.

The VEH Cooperative Program is scheduled for a minimum of one class

period in each of two semesters in addition to time spent in on-the-job supervised training. To be eligible, students must be sixteen (16) years of age, must have successfully completed a VEH training program, and must be recommended by the Special Education ARD/IEP Committee. VEH Co-op is offered to handicapped students in grades 11/12. Students may earn one-half to three credits per semester. Twelfth grade students enrolled are exempt from the fourth year of English.

2. Prevocational Laboratory. The Prevocational Laboratory is designed for developmentally disabled students who require a more intensive training program. A work environment is established through job stations, the teacher-supervisor relationship and the use of time clocks. Job stations provide opportunities for collating, stacking, sorting, following directions, completing small projects and jobs and the use of tools and small machines. The student is prepared for on-the-job training, the sheltered workshop or the VEH program. The broad goals for students in this instructional program are to provide the student with skills, training and educational competencies necessary to live in a society and to obtain and maintain employment.

3. Sheltered Workshop. Sheltered Workshop is open to eligible handicapped students in grades 11 and 12, who are sixteen years of age or older. It may be scheduled from three to six class periods in each of two semesters. One-half credit per period will be earned per semester. The student must be enrolled in the workshop two consecutive semesters for a minimum of three class periods to receive any credit. After two semesters are completed, independent semesters of credit may be earned. Twelfth grade students enrolled in this program shall be exempt from the fourth

year of English.

4. Vocational Adjustment Coordinator. The vocational adjustment class, pre-employment training, is a specialized class for handicapped students at the secondary level. This class provides instruction for on-the-job training and full-time employment as a means of fulfilling goals for graduation. The Vocational Adjustment Coordination (VAC) is a special education teacher assigned to the secondary program of instruction. The VAC is a teacher who has the primary responsibility of providing instruction in areas of career orientation, prevocational information and job readiness skills. In addition to this instruction, the VAC acts to secure on-campus job training stations, off-campus job training stations and to coordinate classroom instruction with the on-the-job skills training. Supervision, support and instruction necessary to help the student to succeed on the job will be provided by the VAC. The VAC classroom assignment may be full-time or part-time.

The On-the-Job training component for the VAC program is open to eligible handicapped students sixteen (16) years of age or older in grades 11 and 12 who have successfully completed a vocational training program and who have been recommended by the ARD/IEP Committee. The vocational training may include regular vocational courses, VEH vocational courses, or courses such as homemaking, typing, etc. On-the-Job training may be scheduled from three to six class periods a day. Students earn one-half credit per period per semester. A minimum of one and one-half credits must be earned to receive any credit. Independent credits may be earned after the initial one and one-half credits are earned. Twelfth grade students enrolled are exempt from the fourth year of English unless a

remedial reading course was substituted for English in the ninth grade.

5. Regular Vocational Programs. Programs offered through Occupational and Continuing Education provide an extensive range of vocational training opportunities. Special Education students may participate in these courses to the fullest extent with consideration for modification and accessibility of equipment and tools and the completion of prerequisite courses.

Making the Match

Houston I.S.D. special education and vocational personnel have been involved in determining which aptitudes, basic skills, physical competencies and behaviors are essential for success in the various vocational alternatives. The author's research concerning behaviors observable by teachers in school settings and the on-the-job status of handicapped students (Deans, 1981) agreed with previous studies that "work behaviors" are the predominant factor to assess in determining readiness or instructional priorities. Assessment of which settings best facilitate or accomodate the various work behaviors is presently performed on a case-by-case basis.

More progress has been seen in the match between aptitude profiles and vocational training settings. The profiles obtained on the McCarron-Dial Work Evaluation System are helpful in determining which program level is most appropriate for the lower functioning students. General estimates of strengths and weaknesses can also be obtained. A student who performed in the "Day Care" program level with strengths in gross motor functioning but weaknesses in sensory processing and fine motor skills would need to show improvement in the later two areas before sheltered employment could be considered a viable option. Hence his IEP would include specific re-

medial help in fine motor and haptic activities.

Aptitude testing which is based on the USES Occupational Aptitude Patterns (OAP's) is highly usuable by the Vocational ARD/IEP Committee. For example, The GATB results provide a listing of those of the 66 OAP's which a student has "made" or come close to making, i.e. possesses sufficient tested aptitude to pursue. The vocational education department has determined which OAP's are suggested as vocational class prerequisites. For example, a student may exhibit strength in only manual dexterity and eye-hand coordination but display marked difficulty in perceptual and academic areas. He could be recommended for the vocational classes related to OAP 29, Worker Trait Group 05.12, Mechanical which include Auto Mechanics Helper and Office Duplication Practices, if interests are supportive.

Thus, the specific "profiles" of students are matched with the "profiles" of the vocational alternatives to determine what each student "can do" best. The recommendations are than made to the ARD/IEP Committee, composed of special education and vocational personnel, parents and student. The final programming decisions are made at the IEP meeting.

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